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ABSTRACT

This document focuses on the experiences of three beginning teachers, contrasting the personal perspective of each teacher (the "Inside Voice") as reported to the researcher, and the more removed perspective developed by the researcher him/herself (the "Outside Eyes"). The first teacher instructs a single class at an urban vocational high school and field supervises work-study students for the rest of the school day. Undertrained and isolated from staff interaction because of his limited school-based activity, the teacher suffers intellectual near-paralysis due to self-doubt and anguish. The second case study is of a female French teacher in a rural high school. Her perceived satisfaction and success are contrasted with the researcher's perceptions of her self-isolation from fellow staff and her fear of innovation represented in her insistence on rote memorization and strict adherence to text-prescribed instructional sequences. The third case study is of an intermediate grade parochial school teacher who, unable to reconcile needs for classroom control with personal needs for satisfaction, resigns in mid-semester for health reasons. (MJB)

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NEW TEACHERS:
INSIDE VOICES, OUTSIDE EYES

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U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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"The deepest personal sorrow suffered by human beings consists of the difference between what one was capable of becoming and what one has, in fact, become."

----Ashley Montagu

This presentation is about how Ashley Montagu's quote applies to some teachers. More specifically, it's about the first year of teaching. Perhaps a more direct opening quote would be one that I overheard in a teachers' lounge, "If they tried to design a more difficult way to get a start as a teacher, they couldn't come up with a better one. The first year is hell on wheels."

The seven of us would like to report a little bit of a large study we are currently engaged in. It is called the First Year Teacher Study. Most scientific inquiries begin with an itch of some kind--a mental itch. The itch becomes a hunch and people start trying to find ways to find out more about the itch or test out their hunches. Our hunch is that something very strong and very powerful is going on in the lives of first year teachers. We want to know more about it. We want to know what's happening, happening in the lives of these teachers--in the classroom and in their off hours, in their hearts and minds during their first year of teaching. We want to know because all of us have been elementary or secondary teachers and currently are teacher educators. We want to see

if there are things that teacher training can do to provide for a more productive first year of teaching. We want to see if there are some ways that the first year of teaching can be restructured so better things could happen. At a very minimum, we thought if we knew more about the difficulties and problems of first year teachers, we could provide our students with, at least, the fragile armor of being forewarned. We could, at least, raise their consciousness of the kinds of problems that they would encounter. To realize in the midst of one's sense of failure and personal despair that "I am not alone" can be a life-saving message. But there is also evidence of personal satisfactions and successes as you shall hear soon.

So we set out to explore what we call the life space of the first year teacher. First, we needed a sample of beginning teachers. We had choices to make here. We could have taken a particular age range, say the junior high teacher. Instead, we took the whole range from Kindergarten to Grade 12. We also chose to have in our sample both academic and vocational teachers. Instead of choosing teachers from one setting, all suburban teachers for instance, we attempted to get a range of settings, and teachers in public, parochial and private schools. We had an important choice, either to take a large sample and, therefore, have to limit the depth of our inquiry, or to take a smaller sample and have close and careful study. We chose the second. We have seventeen teachers in our study and we are looking at them and working with them with some intensity. We started talking with them before they began

teaching last August and we have regular interviews with them, many of which are recorded on audiotapes. We try to observe them in class on a weekly basis. We gather data from their colleagues and supervisors and other sources. We are trying throughout to look at many sources of data and thus be able to put together wholistic accounts of real people.

Right now, we are in the midst of our study. The only thing I think that we are convinced of is that we are on to an important topic and that we are all learning a good deal. However, we wanted today to give you a glimpse of the sorts of things that we are finding.

Since our study is really about people, we felt that the best way to share our study with you would be to give you a sense of the world of three teachers. For each teacher, however, you will get two views: one an inside, subjective report from the teacher as he or she might tell the story--describing his view of what's going on; and a second, the view we're getting, looking at them from the outside. And hence, the title of this presentation, "New Teachers: Inside Voices, Outside Eyes."

Our first teacher's story is one of anguish, self-doubt and a near paralysis before the task at hand. That is the case, at least, so far.

Stephen Jackson: The Agony

Outside Eyes

Stephen Jackson didn't start out as a teacher. He graduated from college and worked in business for three years before taking an opportunity to teach merchandising at an urban vocational high school. His teacher training consisted of one short workshop.

Jackson is often not at school for large portions of the day. He teaches only one class, and for the rest of the day he does on-the-job supervision of the 17 merchandising students whom he has placed in jobs around the city. Jackson is the only teacher at his school with this sort of schedule. Because of these responsibilities he usually cannot attend faculty meetings. He also misses much of the "scuttle-butt" that goes on around the school. For example, when one teacher resigned in the wake of teacher dissatisfaction with administrative practices, Jackson was surprised, and told me that he really didn't know "things were that bad."

Steve Jackson doesn't feel like a member of the school faculty in other ways. He has reported that he simply doesn't "know his way around." He doesn't even know how to operate the ditto machine, and almost started it on fire while five other teachers were waiting to use it.

In the manner of his business experience, Steve Jackson views the principal as his direct supervisor. He knows the principal was once a distributive education teacher, and respects the advice and experience he offers. I've observed

that the principal has a sincere way of soothing Jackson's fears and giving him advice, but at the same time attaching blame or inducing guilt. This blame or guilt reinforces Jackson's insecurity and confirms his fear that he is not competent to teach. Jackson has told me that he fears the principal's disapproval, and is taking conscious steps to gain and keep his support.

In his teaching, Jackson simply lacks some basic skills. For instance, he spends an unusual amount of "dead time" at the start of each class: reviewing attendance, questioning students about overdue homework assignments, and gathering information about job-related matters. Consequently, he bores many of the students before the substance of the class begins; he publicly proclaims the fact that assigned work is not being done, which sets a norm making it easier for future homework to be ignored, and, he makes public his conflicts with individual students, putting himself on the defensive in front of the class. Jackson has expressed to me that some of the laziest students are the most popular with the rest of the class, and he feels he cannot continually criticize these students, because other students support them. He also told me that his continual conflict with certain students have led to intense frustration and a very negative attitude. He further expressed concern that perhaps these negative thoughts were an indication that he should not be teaching--that a dedicated teacher would never have such feelings about his students.

Jackson is aware of how he comes across in class, but he feels that he is caught in a bind: on the one hand he feels that he should let students do as they wish--after all, responsibility must be practiced. On the other hand he is afraid to let them go. He knows that if he doesn't keep after them they will not do their work. He feels real pressure from the principal to take responsibility for his students' work and their performance on the job.

Jackson has said repeatedly that he does not know how to plan for teaching. I have noticed that he does not make long-range plans, and that his daily teaching tends to make use of whatever materials or ideas are easily at hand. He plans with little concern for sequence and thus his daily successes and failures have no contextual meaning and are of little use in future planning.

Jackson's inability to plan is compounded by his lack of teaching skills such as questioning. His questions are too easy, too hard, or so narrowly focused that his poorly prepared students have little chance of guessing the one right answer the teacher wants. The end result is boredom and oppressive silence.

But for all his conflicts and problems, Steve Jackson's biggest fear is failure. He has never failed before in his life. But now he sees a very real chance that he might. He is surrounded by his failures to carry out plans made in the idealistic days before school began. He is surrounded by seventeen students who by his own measures are failing to learn. Steve Jackson is scared.

Inside Voice

It's a cold, snowy Tuesday morning in December. Steve has already made his way through the empty building to his classroom. He sits down to make final preparations for today's class, but slips, instead, into a daydream, a recollection of what his class is like:

> As usual, the students will wander in, bang on the lockers and mill around until called to order. They will take their seats and wait. They will wait for him to start. He will begin with attendance. "Let's see ... Miss Forte,... Miss Stevenson,.. Mr. Taylor, ... Mr. ..." and in silence he finishes. There will be no responses anyway. That done, he will announce the due dates of all assignments and projects, and ask for any questions. Except for Mr. Barth's surprised retort, "When was that assigned?!" there will likely be none. He will announce that another set of graded papers will be available at the front desk after class, and that some students have not picked up their papers from the last two sets. He will review the list of students who have assignments

overdue. "Miss Anderson, you have still not turned in the Chapter Three Review. When can I expect that?" She answers uncommittingly, and he thinks to himself,

I'LL BELIEVE THAT WHEN I SEE IT.

"Mr. Barth, you owe me both the Chapter Review and the assignment on current retail practices. You shouldn't fall behind like this ... Chapter Three Review. It was assigned last Thursday."

OF COURSE HE DOESN'T REMEMBER: HE NEVER PAYS ATTENTION WHEN HE'S SUPPOSED TO.

"Mr. Dimter. Have you anything to turn in to me yet?" And he will continue on with this daily litany until nearly three-fourths of the class have been called to accounting.

WHY DO I DO THIS! WHY DON'T I JUST FORGET ABOUT ASSIGNMENTS. IT'S THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO TURN THEM IN: IF THEY DON'T, IT'S THEIR PROBLEM ... I HATE THE WAY I SOUND UP HERE. THEY ARE TIRED OF HEARING IT. AND I'M TIRED OF SAYING IT.

And yet he concludes: "I don't know why you people cannot turn assignments in on time. Late assignments lose credit. In your jobs, you'll

find that deadlines must be met. You can't expect to be employed if you're going to be late all the time. Time is money in the business world." Mr. Jefferson now enters the classroom. He sits and customarily greets his friends.

OH, YOU'RE LATE AGAIN JEFFERSON. JUST STRUT RIGHT ON IN HERE. DON'T MIND THAT THE CLASS HAS ALREADY BEGUN. NOT A CARE IN THE WORLD, I BET.

"Mr. Jefferson, do you have either of the assignments that are overdue? No? I need those assignments if I'm to get some real solid feedback about what you're learning. How can I plan a program when you don't do the assigned work?"

OH, ENOUGH OF THIS ALREADY!

He listens and hears it again: this absolute quiet has taken over his classroom; his is the only voice to be heard, the only heart that beats in this room.

WHY ARE THEY SO QUIET?

The silence continues. He looks into their faces.

THESE ARE MY STUDENTS. WHAT HAVE I DONE TO MAKE THEM SO QUIET? WHAT HAVE I DONE TO MAKE THEM SO HOSTILE TOWARD ME ... SO ALIEN. I FEEL SO BAD DOWN INSIDE. BUT I CAN'T LET THEM SEE IT. I HATE THIS.

The silence arouses their attention. They look to him to understand what is going on. They look to each other. They look to him to continue.

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR FEELINGS IN CLASS. THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M HERE FOR.

He breaks the quiet. "All right, let's get started. There's a lot to be done, as usual."

The slamming of the first locker wakes Steve from his reverie. Nineteen minutes to go. He opens his briefcase. Therein lie all the miseries of the night before: the unfinished set of test papers.

ALL THE TIME I PUT INTO THAT UNIT, AND LOOK HOW POORLY THEY DID: 15/30, 11/30, 17/30, 9/30 ...I MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING WRONG.

A request for budget estimates for next year.

I'VE GOT TO TURN THIS IN TODAY. BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO FILL THIS OUT. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN.

The empty lesson plan book. He takes it out and opens it to today's date.

IT'S EMPTY. WHAT? DID I REALLY EXPECT SOMETHING TO APPEAR OVERNIGHT! WHAT DO I DO TODAY? OH, YEAH. I'VE GOT TO FINISH THE PRESENTATION I STARTED YESTERDAY AND THEN...THEN WHAT?

And he's distracted. Also inside the briefcase Steve spies the reasons he could not have dinner with his friends last night. Friends who cannot understand his apparent coolness and constant preoccupation with school.

I'M LOSING THEM. I'M LOSING THEM AS FRIENDS. I DON'T WANT THAT TO HAPPEN, BUT I CAN'T BLAME THEM IF IT DOES. I DIDN'T KNOW THIS WAS PART OF THE JOB.

He sees the possibilities of failure. The many ways he is not succeeding. They sit there in every column of the grade book, in the stack of ungraded papers, in the avoided list of phone calls to parents, in the empty lesson plan book.

I DON'T KNOW WHY I CAN'T DO THESE THINGS. I TRY SO HARD. I DON'T WANT TO FAIL. I'M SICK FOR THINKING ABOUT IT. AND I'M TIRED.

Steve did not sleep well last night; he has not slept well for many, many nights since school began. His throat tightens. He Can feel his eyes well up.

LORD, HELP ME. DON'T LET ME GIVE UP. DON'T LET ME GIVE UP. DON'T LET ME FAIL.

Barth comes up to him. "Mr. Jackson, do we have to turn in any stuff today?"

I CAN'T ANSWER THAT. NOT NOW. NOT ANYMORE.

He opens his attendance book and stands up.

* * *

We move now from a city high school to a rural high school, from a story of human suffering to one of some personal satisfaction and perceived success.

Susan Meadows: A View From Behind the Desk

Inside Voice

AS A TEACHER I AM SUPPOSED TO BE PERFECT AND NOT MAKE MISTAKES. I HAVE TO SET AN EXAMPLE, BE A MODEL...KIDS DON'T LOOK AT ME AS A PERSON. THEY SEE ME AS THEIR TEACHER. THAT'S THE WAY IT SHOULD BE.

Sue sits behind her desk looking at the students who are exchanging yawns as they try to wake up for the day. She arranges her papers. As she looks up she sees herself only six short years ago, seated as her students are, doing as she is told, listening to her French teacher say, "OK, open your books to page twelve and repeat after me..." It is 7:00 in the morning. She looks out her window and notices that the sun is not yet up.

IS ALL OF THIS REAL? AM I REALLY A FRENCH TEACHER? DID I REALLY FIND A JOB TEACHING FRENCH IN A SCHOOL JUST TEN MINUTES FROM HOME? I'M LUCKY. I COULD BE STILL WAITING TABLES OR SUBSTITUTING LIKE I DID LAST YEAR. YET HERE I AM

WITH TWENTY-TWO HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMEN EXPECTING ME TO TEACH THEM FRENCH. MY STUDENTS ARE GREAT. I LIKE THEM. I THINK WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER. WE'RE ALIKE IN MANY WAYS--ALL FARM PEOPLE, ALL PRETTY TRADITIONAL. I KNOW WHAT THESE STUDENTS WANT. IT WAS WHAT I WANTED, TOO--TO GO TO COLLEGE, TO MAKE SOMETHING OF MYSELF. AND NOW I'M READY TO DO THAT, TO BECOME A TEACHER.

Outside Eyes

Sue is 22 years old and single. She is 5'2" tall and medium weight. She has long brown frosted hair and dresses attractively. She attended a small liberal arts college and spent a year as a waitress and a substitute teacher before being hired to her present teaching position. Sue was asked to participate in the First Year Teacher Study during the last week of August and although she expressed a willingness to "be involved" her participation has not been enthusiastic.

Inside Voice

The bell. "OK, class, open your books to page twelve and repeat after me." The dialogue begins. An important part of Sue's classroom instruction. She grasps the book firmly in her hands. It becomes a part of her. The text is what makes her classes productive. Without it she would be lost. Without the students' workbooks she would have to ditto exercises for seatwork as she did during the first weeks of school before the books arrived. Without the accompanying test manual she

would have to prepare exams. The textbook. The same one she had learned French from in high school. The same one she had used in student teaching. Again she thinks about how lucky she is.

Outside Eyes

Personal interview with the Principal--September 2: The principal is a young administrator, soft-spoken and very relaxed. He told me that the high school has 908 students and a staff of 45. Fifteen of the teachers are new to the system but only three are new to teaching. There are 3,100 students in the system, most of whom are bussed to school using three rotations. The high school and junior high school are on split sessions because the community has failed to pass the last eight bond issues. It is mainly a farming community and most of the families like the split sessions because it allows young students to work in the morning, and older students can be home in the afternoon. The parents see nothing wrong with starting the day at 5 a.m.; that is common practice on the farm.

Inside Voice

The students seem to be learning the pronunciation of the dialogue. Good. She stands and turns to the board behind her. "Copy these words in your notebooks. Fifteen new words should be enough for today." The students all have notebocks. They are all quiet. They all begin to write. Sue repeats each word aloud in French,"Un...Deux...Trois...." Her eyes sparkle.

Her eyebrows dance on her forehead. Her face makes the words come alive. The students repeat the words. She enjoys seeing them participate.

Sitting back down at the desk and glancing at the book she reads aloud from it. She asks a question. Silence. She repeats the question. Silence. "Louis." He is silent. Her voice becomes tense. She thinks the students did not do their homework. "Jean." Silence. She looks from face to face. "Oh, come on. This is easy. You can do this. I guess I'll have to give you some help...." She answers the question. "Now, see, that wasn't hard. Ok, Marie, you do the next one." Marie never lets her down. Marie always takes her work seriously. Marie responds correctly. Good. "Ok. Now I want each of you to tell me in French where you were born." Each student does this. Good. She always likes to see everyone respond at least once during a class period.

Sometimes Sue gets the urge to do something different. She'd like to tell the class about the year she spent in France, but she feels trapped. She thinks that the book must be covered first. Experience has shown her that to really learn a language the students should cover the book lesson by lesson. She continues with the drills.

There are now five minutes left in class. She stands and writes the homework on the board. She sits back down behind her desk. The class is quiet. "That's all for today." She looks down at her book and thinks about how smoothly the lesson

went. The students squirm in their seats preparing for the bell. It rings. No one stops to chat. She is busy re-arranging her papers for her next class. It goes much the same as the first. This is the way she had planned.

Outside Eyes

Within the first week of school Sue had established a pattern in her classroom--a pattern from which she rarely deviates: bell, attendance, homework check, textbook drills, and assignment. My impression initially was that the textbook was providing her with the security she needed to maintain her classes. I kept waiting for her to separate herself from the textbook, to do something besides rote drills. I kept expecting something to change, yet nothing did. Sue is teaching the way she was taught. She is using those methods which helped her learn and those which, through experience, have given her the confidence she needs to teach.

Inside Voice

NOW IT'S THIRD PERIOD. THE CLASS I DREAD. A SECOND YEAR CLASS. ONLY FOURTEEN STUDENTS. BUT THEY ARE <u>SO</u> LAZY. SO BLASÉ. MOST DAYS THIS CLASS MAKES ME FEEL THE FRUSTRATIONS I HEAR OTHER TEACHERS TALKING ABOUT. THESE STUDENTS ACT LIKE THEY DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO ME. IT'S LIKE PULLING TEETH TO GET THEM TO RESPOND. I WONDER WHY.

The bell. "Ok, get out your homework. I'm coming around to check it today. Well, I see that some of you have done it and some of you are falling behind. I hope that you'll all be

prepared for the test at the end of the week." She goes back to her desk, sits down and opens her textbook for recitation. Ten minutes into the lesson the P.A. clicks on. The principal announces that the band director would like all the band members to report to the stage immediately. Eight students close their books and prepare to leave. "This is the second time this week you all have missed French. I hope this practice won't continue. You'll find yourselves falling behind."

NOW WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH THE REMAINING THIRTY MINUTES AND ONLY SIX STUDENTS? SHOULD I CONTINUE AS PLANNED, OR SHOULD I STOP? IF I CONTINUE, EIGHT STUDENTS WILL HAVE TO CATCH UP. IF I STOP, WHAT WILL I DO WITH MY OTHER SECOND YEAR CLASS? I'VE GOT TO KEEP THESE CLASSES TOGETHER. THESE CONTINUAL INTERRUPTIONS ARE REALLY FOWLING UP MY PLANS. THEY FRUSTRATE ME ALMOST AS MUCH AS MY STUDY HALL DUTY DOES.

Outside Eyes

Sue seldom goes to the teachers' lounge. She remains in her room during conference period and lunch. She has visited the lounge a couple of times but she reports that she just doesn't feel comfortable there. She told me that sometimes teachers will see her in the hall and ask here where she has been. However, since she is the only language teacher in the school she feels isolated from other faculty and has no desire to become personal friends with her colleagues. She prefers to keep her private life separate from her teacher life.

Inside Voice

STUDY HALL. I HATE IT. WHAT A CONTRAST TO MY CLASSROOM! I'D RATHER TEACH TWO MORE CLASSES A DAY THAN PLAY POLICEMAN IN THAT AUDITORIUM FOR FORTY MINUTES. I WONDER WHY STUDENTS ACT SO DIFFERENTLY IN THERE. THEY MAKE STRANGE REMARKS TO ME, AND THE BOYS MAKE ANIMAL NOISES IN THE BACK OF THE HALL. I KNOW MY FRENCH STUDENTS WOULD NEVER ACT LIKE THAT. I CAN ALMOST UNDERSTAND WHY MY CO-TEACHER LOSES HER TEMPER AND SENDS STUDENTS TO THE OFFICE. I DON'T REALLY THINK THAT IS RIGHT, THOUGH. I FEEL LIKE I'LL NEVER GET RESPECT IF I SEND ALL MY PROBLEMS TO SOMEONE ELSE TO SOLVE. I THINK, AT LEAST SO FAR, THAT I CAN HANDLE MY OWN PROBLEMS. ANYWAY, I'M TRYING TO.

Lunch period. Already it's 11:30. Sue returns to her room and sits at her desk. She grades a few papers. She relaxes. Only one more class and then she can go home. At 12:05 she leaves her room to be hall monitor outside the lunchroom. All teachers are required to do this. Students have been throwing food and wandering around in the hallway. She does as she is told.

Finally the last class is over. She quickly gathers up her materials because the junior high teacher who shares the room is coming in, and so are the junior high students. Since it is not Monday, she does not have to stay for a meeting with the yearbook staff. Since it is not Tuesday, she does not have to stay with the French Club. She goes to the English room awaiting 1:15 so she may leave the building.

No work to take home. No papers to grade. She likes her job. She thinks she is doing well. She wonders why people talk about the difficulties of being a first year teacher. She has none. She is happy.

* * *

Our third teacher is also a "small-town girl" but to her surprise, her new school is quite different from her own rural elementary school and her expectations of what teaching would be like.

Donna Hastings: "I Don't Let On."

Inside Voice

August 26

Dear Janet,

I'm writing to tell you I will start teaching next week. I'm in a good parochial school in a nice neighborhood. I'm really enthusiastic about the chance to teach intelligent, go-get-'em kids although they're older than what I wanted. I'm going to be the 6th grade teacher, and will have 7th and 8th grade Social Studies. The only thing that bothers me is their individualized Social Studies program. It's really non-traditional.

It's funny to think of being a teacher where kids will be doing what I say. I hope I don't have to yell but, if it's necessary, I will. The kids will need to know I'm in control. They'll know I'm fair so I think we will have good rapport.

Am I glad we went to parochial school! It's nice to go to a school where there is community feeling and community control, good moral values and parent involvement. Hey! Guess what! Sister said she hired me on good recommendations from people at Catholic College (she's really high on that school). I hope I don't disappoint her.

I just had to tell you about this job. Wow! I just hope it isn't too hard to individualize that Social Studies program.

Everything should be set by Thanksgiving. I'm planning on calling parents the first day to get acquainted and to begin on the right foot (I want the first call to be a pleasant one). It's important that teachers talk to parents about good things, and not just gripes.

It's been good for me this summer to get help from the reading teacher and other experienced teachers. You know, if you turn to older people you get good advice. Experience really counts.

Please write.

Love,

Donna

Outside Eyes

Donna grew up in a very small town and spent all but one year of her schooling in small Catholic schools. She is the oldest of seven children. She received her professional training at a Catholic college. It appeared to be traditional, with heavy emphasis on planning instruction.

Before beginning teaching, Donna's talk was full of cliches about teaching and students. Also, she seemed a bit anxious about the individualized Social Studies program, and, when asked, could only respond vaguely about what it entailed.

Inside Voice

September 20

Dear Janet,

I was thinking about you last week and thought I'd write. Unfortunately I've been very tired and haven't felt like doing anything. Usually I have a headache.

School is hard. Today was my worst day by far. All three grades were so wound-up I couldn't do anything. I just decided to try to keep the noise down so they wouldn't bother Sister. It was unreal! I'm really disappointed with my teaching--not with the kids. I feel it's me. What's the use? If I'm not keeping control, I might as well not do anything else.

I wish I were working with younger kids, although the 8th grade is a good bunch with some real leaders. Oh! One pleasant thing so far--some 8th graders put on their own play for the younger kids. Everybody liked it. I think Sister liked it too. The play tells a little bit about the 8th grade. They seem so mature while also being little kids. I don't know quite how to make presentations for them. It usually turns out that I gear the lessons too low. But when I try to treat them like adults I lose control.

The 7th grade--Ohhhh--I feel I've lost them! They're terrible! Playbaby stuff--no books, constant talk, talk, talk, talk.... I just dread that period. It's the first one after lunch and it ruins my whole lunch period just thinking about it. Everybody knows about the 7th grade! When 6th grade comes in they say: "Oh Miss Hastings, you've had a bad day with 7th grade!" Of course I don't let on--but they know. I've asked Sister and some of the other teachers what to do. Do you know what they say? "Sit on them." What does that mean??? Even when other people give me specific suggestions they don't work.

Sorry! I got a headache again. Darn that 7th grade!

Love,

Donna

Outside Eyes

Donna's use of the word "presentation" accurately depicts her approach to teaching. It was as if there were separate realities in the classroom: one in which Donna would make presentations, the other in which the students were expected to learn. It was as if she thought learning would happen after teaching was done.

When things began to break down, Donna wanted help, but she found others' responses to be neither clear nor helpful.

Inside Voice

September 25

Hi!

Just had to write! I had a great day today. I think I have found the answer for the 7th grade. When they came in I bombarded them with my presentation and asked questions of specific students. I had three worksheets. When they finished one, they got another--immediately. I did not let up.

Before today I was wondering whether I should stay in teaching. Looks like I might have control now. If I do, I'll stay.

Gotta go--please write!

Donna

October 5

Dear Janet,

I wish you were here so we could talk. You know my teaching experiences are being studied by a man from OSU--Randy. He interviewed me the other day and asked if I had found anything surprising since beginning my teaching. I had to say yes. Remember when we were in school--especially grade school--how we always looked up to adults? Well, these kids don't have any respect for anybody or anything--not me, Sister, the Church or anybody.

Another thing--these kids really need to get their basic grammar, to improve their spelling (it's atrocious), and to

learn to write and to do research papers. But I can't teach them if they don't pay any attention to me. I wish I had control like men teachers do.

Randy asked me what I thought of myself. I thought I would just die! But I didn't let on. I told him I think of myself as a very capable teacher--as far as presenting lessons (I always have good lessons planned). I also think I have good potential, and that I'm able to control the class, although I'm not doing it now.

I think the kids want me to be a mom instead of a teacher. I kind of like that because I'm a mothering person anyway. It's better to be a mother than a friend because when you're a friend you can't have control. I also like the fact that students turn to me and like me, although it isn't important that they like me. Oh sure, I care if they like me, but the important thing is that I teach and they learn.

Love,

Donna

Outside Eyes

First I thought Donna didn't know what to do. Then I thought she was lazy. However, with more reflection and introspection I began to perceive Donna as immobilized by her own uncertainty and fear; she was not sure what to do and had little idea what might be the outcome. Her efforts seemed to be geared at keeping her head above water.

Inside Voice

October 15

Dear Janet,

This is ridiculous! I don't know if I can stand it any more. I think I need a 9-5 job, like a receptionist, where I could see different people everyday and go home and enjoy myself.

Nobody cares here. Why should my life be so messed-up? Even the parents don't care, except for the ones whose kids are doing ok anyway. And the people who work here are so cold (brrrrr) and uncooperative. You should hear the awful things they say about the kids.

Sister always comes in and bawls out my class for being noisy. Really, much of the time the noise level is ok, but, because we're beside Sister's office, nothing seems acceptable.

I'm sorry to have griped so much. I really need a sounding board. Not many people want to hear this. Thanks for listening.

Love,

Donna

Outside Eyes

Donna expressed on several occasions how she liked to talk with me about her teaching. Apparently there were few, if any, persons with whom she could share her teaching experiences; there was no one who had seen her teach but me.

She had expected to find a warm community feeling in the school. She didn't. There were probably many factors contributing to this. It could have been the differences between the kind of community she grew up in and the community where she taught. Or it could have been her own confused state, or....

Inside Voice

October 22

Janet,

Well, it finally happened. Sister blew up at me. She yelled at my class and said: "Donna, I don't think I can take it any longer. You are going to have to get control!" Classes were changing and everybody heard.

I'm too upset to write anymore. I could lose my job.

Donna

October 29

Dear Janet,

Sorry about the last letter.

Sister has been observing my classes. We had a conference and she really tore into me. It hurt, but I didn't let on. Really, she's right, but I wish she could have done it differently. But she couldn't because of her personality.

She said, if a teacher doesn't have control, the natural outcome is chaos. And, finally (!!!), she gave me some specific

suggestions on what to do. I guess I should have gone to her at the beginning and made agreements about how we should work together for good discipline. Well, I'm going to get started on a new foot. If this doesn't work ....

I think maybe things will get better. I now have a grip on the problem and can do something about it.

Sorry for not sounding so great when I write.

Thanks for listening,

Donna

November 7

Hi!

Things are better!!! There has really been a change. What a difference one week makes. I'm not sure the students still think of me as "The nice lady in 6th grade and Social Studies but, you know, many of them have wanted me to be different, for a long time. They thought I was too easy. Some even said I should be "meaner".

Of course you remember the 7th grade. Things are better, now that I've got them over a barrel. They're beginning to realize I'm no softie.

I talked with Randy recently. It's funny. I come out of those interviews thinking about things I haven't been able to make decisions about. For example, calling parents -- I never did get around to it. Honestly, since we didn't have a phone for the first two weeks, I couldn't call, and by then, there were already problems. After that, I just felt I couldn't call

because the problems were mine. I don't know. It's hard to decide when to do what.

I think I'm learning, but I hate to think anybody has to lose while I take a year to learn. Maybe I don't know all the tricks of the trade, and that's the problem. Well, tomorrow's another day.

Love,

Donna

November 15

Hi!

Just a note to let you know I resigned today. I've been having migraine headaches, and the doctor thought I shouldn't be anxious while they run tests. I need to take it easy for a while.

I'll write soon.

Donna

Outside Eyes

Donna had wanted to be a teacher since her junior year in high school. She completed a teacher preparation program and apparently had good recommendations from her instructors and cooperating teacher.

Donna was not succeeding as a teacher. She was not satisfied with her teaching or herself. On several occasions she spoke of seeing herself as two persons: one who taught, and another who was the person she had known since childhood.

* * *

Conclusion

Frances Fuller has written, "Both the situation and the work of the beginning teacher need painstaking observation and analysis." Later she concludes her piece, entitled "Becoming a Teacher," with the following admonition to her teacher educator colleagues: "The appropriate question at this stage of our knowledge is not 'Are we right?,' but only 'What is out there?'" (Fuller and Brown, 1975, p. 52) We hope our study will help us a little further on the road of finding out more about the complex set of forces and dispositions which make up the life space of the first year teacher. What we have presented here is really a glimpse of a glimpse. We have still so much to learn.